

# Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



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# Life of the Spirit

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## THE CROWN OF LIFE

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

**T**RADITIONALLY, meditations on death have leagued with those on the judgment and on hell to induce a type of fear that leads to repentance. Death terrifies the pagan and the Christian who by sin has strayed into a pagan way of life. In a world given over to the search for material well being and the more physical perfections of human life these terrors are pushed into the background of the mind. The foreground is wholly filled with the desires and activities connected with good living. Meditation on death is the last thing the living materialist would willingly undertake.

Today, however, this gloomy background threatens more persistently and enters subtly into the texture of life. In a certain sense men are today obsessed with death. National life as well as international is so organised that war becomes inevitable and modern war demands an ever increasing 'death-potential'. The governments of nations are all the time seeking weapons that will kill a greater number of men, women and children; and men stand by, petrified and powerless to prevent the working of the death machine. The obsession, too, creeps more subtly into our modern life in the desire to put the suffering out of pain by putting them to death. It is not better to enter worldly kingdoms maimed or lame than to be kept outside hale and hearty. The maimed and the lame who suffer incurably must die. And what is to be said of the increasing desire that living men should not be generated, and if generated, to be put out of the way before coming to the light of day? Complacency in sterility spells a death which is not only physical but spiritual as well.

Without God this under current of preoccupation with death becomes inevitable. The absence of a true end for human life,



that is to say, where there is no true finality in which man may discover the permanent fulfilment of his being, throws men back on death—the end without finality. Without a spiritual end for life the physical end spells the terror of negative finality. After death there is nothing.

Those whose end is life, life eternal in God, take an entirely different point of view. They carry with them the figure of a man done to death in agony nailed to a tree. They attempt to establish for themselves a constant life of 'mortification'—a life that is a constant 'making self to die'. The Christian, then, seeks the integrity of a whole life not by acquiring the maximum comfort and enjoyment in his daily existence, nor by seeking a fulfilment of all his living human powers. He finds the fulness of life in death. Christ insisted so often that the seed must die and be buried in order to bring forth the new life; that he finds his life who loses it; that the followers of Christ must take up their cross daily. And after listening to this strange paradox his disciples could cry: 'Oh death, where is your sting?' Meditation on death in those days was a gloriously living contemplation, surrounded as the early Church was by scores of men, women and children dying for their faith and thus having a second, supernatural birthday.

A generation ago men were thinking that the age of martyrs had passed, that the brutality of inflicting torture and death on a person because of his religious beliefs was no longer a real, live possibility. And so they made gloomy and doleful meditations on the passing of life, while their spiritualist neighbours tried to establish a superficial link between those who are living and those who had 'passed over' in order to assuage the melancholy reality.

But that generation has suddenly passed into another whence the Christian finds himself surrounded by his fellows in many countries falling, tortured and slain because they are followers of Christ. St Thomas suggests that fortitude, which chiefly inspires martyrdom, is exercised principally in warfare and that the martyr died as it were fighting for the highest good, namely for God (II-II, 123, 5 c. and ad. 1). The metaphor is an apt one when we consider the numbers who are now slain because of their adherence to the faith. They are not yet indeed honoured by the Church as such. Many are inevitably immersed in political struggles, a fact that makes it difficult to disentangle true martyrdom for the faith from some more nationalistic motive. This must happen where



the faith has been part and parcel of the normal life of the citizen. And, even if many are never recognised as dying purely out of love of our Lord, they are not to be despised for a heroism devoted perhaps to loyalty to their country.

It was just this confusion between politics and the faith which made the situation in England under Henry VIII and Elizabeth so difficult for the ordinary Catholic to understand and which offers such a very close parallel to many of the persecutions of modern times. And if today England and most English-speaking countries are not subject to the insensate persecution that has caused such a shock to our refined sensibilities which had relegated martyrdom to days gone by, nevertheless death for Christians stands at our doors and we are at least called upon to enter into the spirit of those who are dying and to share their deaths with them. We have to glory in their sacrifice, and to glory in death we must enter into the life which precedes martyrdom. For the martyr is not made in a moment; martyrdom is the crown of life spent in preparation for it. Death crowns life in the Christian's view; it does not destroy it. And every Christian should now be leading a life which could so be crowned.

Here we may turn to the lives of those men and women in England who lived in such a way that they are now honoured—particularly on the 4th of May—as martyrs, witnesses by their death to the deathlessness of their faith. We can nearly always detect in the life of a martyr the seeds of his final glory. And we detect it principally in the way he prayed and in the way he followed the austere figure of death by *mortifying* his own human nature. It was this that St Thomas More pointed to as the three Carthusian Priors and the Brigittine were drawn in agony past his window on their way to Tyburn:

These blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage . . . For God considering their long continued life in most sore and grievous penance, will no longer suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery and iniquity, but speedily hence he taketh them to the fruition of his everlasting Deity.

More compared them to his own 'miserable life' spent 'most fully'; but beneath the humility of the saint we may discover the secret of his own death. He had himself devoted time and energy to a similar pursuit of 'mortification'. Not only had he



persistently worn his shirt of hair almost all his adult life; he had studied under the shadow of these Carthusians' own austere lives in the London Charterhouse; he had risen in Cistercian fashion at 2 a.m. and prayed and studied till 7 o'clock, when he assisted at Mass. Friday had always been a day of special penance for the brilliant light among the Christian humanists of the day.

The prayer of these Carthusians, assisting at the Mass of the Holy Spirit before making their decision to die rather than give way to the King's wishes, had been answered—'a soft whisper of air which some perceived with their bodily senses, while all experienced its sweet influence upon their hearts'. The gift of fortitude which is of the stuff of martyrs comes immediately from the Holy Spirit, but it can only come when prayer and mortification have rendered the soul responsive and receptive of his gift. We may turn our eyes for a moment towards that courtier Newdigate, gay friend of the King; he had seen the evil in the King's ways and had died to the world ten years before by entering the Charterhouse. There he had prepared himself by prayer and penance for the time when he would be chained for seventeen days by neck and legs unable to move, the preliminary to his execution with his two brethren, hanged and cut to pieces in the pure white of his monastic habit. Within two months he had followed his prior who, cut down from the gallows, was heard to say gently as his entrails were torn out, 'Oh most merciful Jesus, have pity upon me in this hour'.

Such is the spirit of men who live the Christian life to its full in the midst of death, in the midst of mortification. And that life is one in its essential characteristics both in the unwordly seclusion of the cloister and in the political turmoil of the Chancellor's office. The married man and father of a family, the man who held the highest political post, was moved equally by the spirit of fortitude as was the ecclesiastic who became Bishop of Rochester, and as were these cloistered monks long since snatched from the political or ecclesiastical world. And what is the secret of this triumph in death if not that the life and death of Christ is realised once again in them as it had been in the first martyr, St Stephen who is shown by St Luke in *Acts* to have died the same death as our Lord?

The place of death in the redemption of the world may be seen from this point of view. For originally the penalty of ending



man life in this fashion had been the effect of a sin that unleashed man's physical powers in such a way that they dominated his mortal spirit. Physical death then became inevitable, but always a thing of terror. It was a necessary penalty for sin, but one which was imposed on the cringing spirit of man. He refused to accept it; at least he would never agree to taking it upon himself willingly as a punishment for sin. His spirit even while suffering the penalty cried out against the judgment of God, until the day came when the untarnished and rapier-like will of the Son-made-man was to overcome this resistance to just punishment and thrust through to the very heart of original sin by being willing to die for the whole of man's iniquity. At that moment death itself became the instrument for man of glory to God. The redemption was achieved by the free, active acceptance of the penalties of sin; and this is the principal act of the martyr—that he should willingly and actively *sustain* suffering and death by the virtue and gift of fortitude. 'The virtue of fortitude, the nature of which is to show certain fixed determination, principally deals with the "passion" flight from physical ills, i.e. with fear.' (II-II, 141, 3; cf: 123, 6; 14, 2 ad 3.) The triumph over death is gained only in the acceptance of death; therein lies the paradox of the redemption. To put up with death seems to be the height of 'passivity'; but in effect it must be the deepest and the most powerful act of a man's life for which all the preceding activity must be simply a preparation.

It is here that we can see the full import of a life of prayer and silence and the reason why these two activities in particular form an essential preparation for the death of men like St Thomas More and the Carthusians in the sixteenth century and of the tortured victims of persecution today. Prayer in its simplest expression does not attempt to change God's will or to bring him down to the level of human whims and fancies; prayer moulds the human will upon the divine. A life of constant prayer is not simply a passive attitude of a soul looking towards God, but of frequent acts of petition the underlying theme of which is always 'Thy will be done'. The more the Christian asks from God in this spirit, the more conformed does he become to the unchanging and eternal will of the Father. The contemplation to which the Carthusians and St Thomas More were devoted was at heart simply this devoted resting of their wills upon God's eternal will,



a resting reached by constant acts of resignation. 'That this chalice might pass . . . nevertheless, not my will but thine be done'. The fruit of persistent prayer is therefore the perfection of obedience which is the 'obedience unto death'. In exceptional cases the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, can overcome the perversity of the human will and transform it suddenly into a true vehicle of the divine will of love. But in ordinary circumstances the habit of prayer, softening the will by degrees as the acts of surrender become more protracted and deeper, makes straight the way towards the final acceptance of death. Prayer precedes the full flowering of the gifts of the Holy Ghost as the moisture that gives life to the plant and beauty to its petals.

But it was the life of penance or 'mortification' that struck More most forcibly as the outstanding characteristic of the martyrs. Prayer cannot achieve this softening of the resistance of self-will unless it be supported at the same time by the activity of mortification; for mortification beats down the enemies to the freedom of the spirit. Not only does it demand the same virtue of fortitude which inspires the martyr, but it also deals effectively with the power of physical attraction which clogs the spirit and renders it subject to the moribund declension of the body. Penance tames the passions, gradually subjecting them to the will so that a man may be angry and sin not, love with passion yet chastely in charity, eat with delight yet temperately. By dealing fiercely with his untamed instincts man makes it possible for the will to be free and therefore freely to dispose itself to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Under grace the will controls the movements not only of the inner spiritual activity of such things as prayer, but also the outward actions of the body and soul. During this process of ascetical training the terror of suffering and even death is made remote. It can never be banished altogether, for nature clings to physical life as God has made it so; but the control thus established by mortification makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to exercise the special power of fortitude when death actually stands before the Christian's eyes and puts the firmness of his intention to its greatest test.

Prayer and penance together, then, produce in man that obedience which is required before the Christian can follow Christ *usque ad mortem*. Both active, and strenuously so, they gradually fuse the activity of the human spirit with that of the



holy Spirit, so that there is one activity. In this way the Christian said to have become completely passive in the hands of God, ready to be taken by him wherever he wishes. He is able in this state of powerful passivity to support even death for the love of God. It is therefore the life of the English martyrs that means so much to us today. We admire them in their dying. We are carried away with enthusiasm for the simple faith of St John Fisher, who could say in one short phrase before his execution that he died willingly for the truth of the Catholic faith. But not many of us are called upon to undergo that final test when only the power of the Holy Ghost could carry us through to victory. But that faith of which they are the 'witnesses' is not merely an assent to certain truths; it is a life spurred on to intense activity and overwhelming experience by prayer and penance, which themselves always deepen that union of wills in God which is called charity or love. And this life of faith and charity made fruitful by mortification and continual prayer is demanded of us all if we are to be worthy of those who today are suffering in the same way. There are contemplatives, ecclesiastics and men of the world languishing in prison, tortured to the very depths of their human characters, dying or being killed, and these things they suffer because they have devoted themselves to Christ. If these men are to be supported in their final testing and are to gain the crown, we fellow members of Christ must live in the same spirit of obedience unto death by prayer and penance. And if it so be that the turn might come to one of us, we might then presume to rely upon the Christian life that we had led in company with the host of Christ's members and to die as we had lived—in faith triumphant.



## THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST THOMAS MORE

By

BERNARD FISHER

*The King's good servant—but God's first.*

—St Thomas More on the scaffold.

ST THOMAS MORE, 'the one genius of England', to quote Erasmus, is one of the best-loved of Englishmen. His wit and learning led Swift to number him among the seven



great men of the world.<sup>1</sup> His gentleness and charity led the Elizabethan London playwrights to name him 'the best friend the poor e'er had'.<sup>2</sup> Yet his very greatness and the warmth of his humanity have, in some respects, obscured the essential More. In the vast collection of Moreana available there is very little concerning Thomas More the saint, even less on More the theologian and little on Thomas the lawyer. By profession St Thomas was a lawyer, but it was as a theologian that he was admired and criticised by his contemporaries, and it was as the 'leader of the opposition' that he was liquidated by Henry. Above all, however, the man who died so nobly on 6th July, 1535, was a saint, a mystic and a martyr 'and martyrdom is perhaps the one thing that deserves the cant phrase of practical mysticism'.<sup>3</sup> These facts were understood far better by his contemporaries than by latter writers, for our picture of More is too often that given us by the 'liberal historians' of the last century, who while admiring, were far from understanding the value and meaning of sanctity and for whom theology was a sterile science long since dead. Stapleton, the Douai theologian, who wrote the first published life of More 'for the glory of God, for the pity of England', marvels that 'a man whose life was filled with affairs of public life and the court, who was, too, well versed in general literature, should not only have dipped into scholastic theology but have been so thoroughly familiar with it'.<sup>4</sup>

Here we might also remark that St Thomas was a most ardent follower of Erasmus in his love of the Fathers. He had lectured on the *City of God* as a young man and his works were liberally scattered with quotations from the Fathers. As the official apologist appointed by the English hierarchy he used his knowledge with consummate skill and his adaptations of the Fathers and St Thomas Aquinas are likely to be missed by the average reader. The depth of his theological knowledge is shown best, perhaps, when he deals with the fundamental problem of salvation by faith alone. Here he anticipates the Council of Trent in a really remarkable manner. Realisation of More's capacity as a theologian is vital to

1 *Gulliver's Travels*.

2 *Sir Thomas More*. A Play by a group of Elizabethan playwrights of whom Shakespeare was one.

3 G. K. Chesterton. *Fame of Blessed Thomas More*, p. 64.

4 *Life of Thomas More*. Stapleton trans. Hallett, p. 38.



any appreciation of his importance as a saint and as a mystical writer. I hope this will become clear as we proceed.

Harpsfield's *Life of More* is a thesis proving that St John Fisher and St Thomas More are of one heart and mind with the great martyr-saints of England, St Thomas of Canterbury, St Alban and the rest. In the writings of Saunders and Cardinal Allen this thesis is assumed. Allen's works abound with references to our two great saints: 'such a couple as any other Christian nation would have bought with millions, but thought unworthy to live by the laws of ours'.<sup>5</sup> 'It is the prisons that have yielded us so many Godly prayers, prophecies, letters both of old and latter years: divers of St Paul's divine epistles were edited by the spirit of confession in prison: there was the famous books of comfort written by Sir Thomas More . . .'<sup>6</sup> wrote Allen, while the 1573 edition of *The Dialogue of Comfort* tells us that 'whereas many books have appeared and do daily come forth, that end towards some benefit or other unto me, yet scant any can appear, the profit whereof is so great and extendeth so far as of this'. I hope I am forgiven this long introduction but it should serve to remind us of the early tradition of More, the saint and theologian, while this understanding of St Thomas will give the clue to the continuity of thought among our martyrs whose works are discussed elsewhere. The last word must be with Blessed Edmund Campion who, writing *before* his conversion, could refer to Thomas as a man 'of incredible experience in affairs and penetration of intellect' . . . a man of 'sublime and almost divine wisdom'.<sup>7</sup>

That modern writers have lost this earlier tradition is understandable. As one reads More's works one is struck by the warmth and wit of his personality and it comes as something of a shock to realise what an essentially *silent* person he is. An example will best serve to show what I mean. In *The Dialogue of Comfort*, writing of ambition as being 'womanish' he is immediately reminded of a woman he once knew who 'for when her husband had no list to grow greatly upwards in the world; nor neither would labour for office of authority...she fell in hand with him and all to rated him, and asked him; "What will you do, that you list not to put forth yourself, as other folks do? Will you sit still by the fire and make goslings in the ashes as children do?

<sup>5</sup> and <sup>6</sup> *Apology of Seminaries* 1581, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Campion's *Opuscula*, p. 187.



Would God I were a man, and look what I would do!" "Why wife", quote her husband, "what would you do!" "What? By God! go forward with the best of them. For as my mother was wont to say (God have mercy on her soul), it is ever better to rule than to be ruled. And, therefore by God! I would not, I warrant you, be so foolish as to be ruled when I might rule". "By my troth wife", quoth her husband, "in this I dare say you say true. For I never found you willing to be ruled yet!".<sup>8</sup> The wife is that lovable, commonsense housewife Dame Alice More. The incident must have occurred shortly after More's resignation from the office of Lord Chancellor and he is sitting and thinking, 'doodling' in the ashes with a stick. He does not here tell us, however, *what* he was thinking. Roper, his son-in-law, records how in the Tower, wishing to console his broken-hearted Meg, he confessed that he had spent many long and sleepless nights at Chelsea worrying about his fate and the sufferings that would fall upon his family when the inevitable summons to Westminster arrived. Now, however, there is no need to worry, he says, for the battle is won. 'For me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lappe and dandlethe me.'<sup>9</sup> To console Meg, he made this confession and the remark quoted above which, for all its simplicity, bears the stamp of true mysticism. To Meg, alone, did he confide his secret thoughts and then only to console her. To this same desire we owe the preservation of his wonderful prayers. For the most part these are but headings for meditation written so that he and Meg, separated from each other by the grim walls of the Tower, might yet pray together. Of his long hours of prayer in his chapel at Chelsea we know nothing; this tiny collection is the sole relic of his prayers.

Give me thy grace good Lord  
 To set the world at nought,  
 To set my mind fast upon thee,  
 And not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths  
 To be content to be solitary  
 Not to long for worldly company.

Here, in More's beautiful English, we have his own prayer that

<sup>8</sup> Harpsfield's *Life of More*, p. 95 and *Dialogue of Comfort in English Works* 1557, p. 1,224.

<sup>9</sup> Roper's *Life* and Harpsfield, p. 171.



his inner silence might be increased so that he may have time and opportunity:

Gladly to be thinking of God.

Piteously to call for his help.

To lean unto the comfort of God.

Busily to labour to love him.<sup>10</sup>

'Busily to labour to love him'; could one find a finer definition of the perfect christian life?

This silence of More is no accident; it is a studied thing. For four years as a young man he had lived with the Carthusians, joining them in their prayers and devotions. He decided that God had not called him to be a monk but these four years are the critical years in the formation of *Saint Thomas More*. These Carthusians remained his special friends and watching from his window in the Tower as they were drawn away to execution he could remark: 'Loe, doest thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage?'<sup>11</sup> How deeply he understood them! We can recall how he had said to Meg: 'I assure you, on my faith, that had it not been for my wife and you my children... I would long ere this have closed myself in as straight a room than this (his cell in the Tower) and straighter too.'<sup>12</sup> One can hardly be surprised, therefore, that this same sympathy with the Carthusian ideal is evident throughout the enigmatic second book of *Utopia*.

The Carthusian life is a hidden life, lived by men content to be alone with God, 'content to be solitary', a life of silence. Thomas was not called upon to guide the souls of others, nor called upon, under obedience, to write of his experience with God... his vocation was to live the hidden life of the monk in the world... to combine the most successful public career and perfect family life with an inner awareness of God such as we associate with the great mystics. It is the hidden Carthusian life transplanted into the world. The hair shirt is always there, but hidden, to be smuggled away at the very end when the battle was won.

More's silence is not confined to matters of the spirit but is evident in every aspect of his life. It shows itself in his extreme

<sup>10</sup> English Works, p. 1,416.

<sup>11</sup> Roper and Harpsfield, p. 179.

<sup>12</sup> Roper and Harpsfield, p. 171.



reverence for the conscience of everyman. How often, during his imprisonment did he write to Henry, Cromwell and Meg that 'he would meddle with no man's conscience', and that he asked only to be left in peace with his own? Nowhere is it more apparent than during his trial.

His devotion to the Passion of our Lord is apparent. In the Tower he wrote his *History of the Passion*, part in English part in Latin. Equally apparent is his constant meditation on the four last things, a subject on which he had written a short work when a young man. Now all this is Carthusian, but it is also rooted in the tradition of the English mystics to whom Professor Chambers bids us turn to discover the roots of More's prose style.<sup>13</sup>

In this connection, St Thomas has a special significance. This fifteenth-century devotion to our Lord, wonderful as it was, was sometimes dangerous. Religion and devotion might become a too personal affair; too much of a silent communing of the soul with God. The dangers of the *devotio moderna* and the part it played in preparing the ground for the Reformation is at last beginning to be realised. Thomas's devotion is controlled as one would expect in a theologian. His prayers begin 'Give me thy grace good Lord' and end 'The things, good Lord that I pray for, give me thy grace to labour for'. In the devotional sphere, Luther is answered as clearly as he had been answered by More on the strictly theological arguments on predestination.

Again, it was the whole conception of the Church which was attacked by Luther. In England, too, the Supremacy was no schism but a heresy, for no longer was there to be an infallible Church through which Christ's teachings and his redeeming graces were to reach our souls. Beyond the sphere of faith, St Thomas saw the division of Christendom which must result from Luther's revolt. With the Turks at the gates of Europe she could ill-afford a schism. It is not mere coincidence that the *Dialogue of Comfort* should be a conversation between two Hungarians daily awaiting the Turkish attack! Luther had broken Europe's bond of unity. It is not surprising, therefore, to find More, in the Tower, writing his short thesis on the Blessed Eucharist, the 'bond of unity'. 'Make us all, good Lord, virtually participant of that Holy Sacrament this day, and every day make us all lively

13 *Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*. R. W. Chambers.



members, sweet Saviour Christ, of thy holy mystical body, thy Catholic Church'<sup>14</sup> is a cry of his heart.

Nowhere do all these elements of the essential More show themselves more clearly than in his speech after condemnation. During the long months of imprisonment he had not denied by word or writing the doctrine of the Supremacy; he had merely refused to swear acceptance; he had been *silent*. When, on perjured evidence, he had been found guilty he spoke: 'Since I am condemned, and God knows how; I wish to speak freely of your statute, for the discharge of my conscience. For the seven years that I have studied the matter I have not read in any approved doctor of the Church that a temporal lord could or ought to be head of the spirituality... For one bishop of your opinion I have a hundred saints of mine; and for one parliament of yours, and God knows of what kind, I have the General Councils of 1,000 years; and for one kingdom I have France and all the kingdoms of Christendom... I say further that your statute was ill-made because you have sworn never to do anything against the Church, which through all Christendom is one and undivided, and that you have no authority without the consent of all Christians to make a law or Act of Parliament or Council against the union of Christendom. I know, well, that the reason you have condemned me is because I have never been willing to consent to the King's second marriage; but I hope in the divine goodness and mercy that as St Paul and St Stephen whom he persecuted are now friends in paradise, so we, though differing in this world, shall be united in perpetual charity in the other. I pray God protect the King and give him good counsel.'<sup>15</sup>

Here is an appeal to theological faith; to the Fathers; to the law of nature; to the constitution; to the coronation oath and an appeal for European unity. Here is the calm wit, the masterful command of English and a charity and loyalty deeper than death. At that great moment he possessed to the full that for which he always prayed: 'Give me, good Lord, *a full faith, a firm hope and a fervent charity*, a love to thee, good Lord, incomparable above the love to myself; and that I love nothing to thy displeasure, but everything in an order to thee.'

<sup>14</sup> English Works, p. 1,416.

<sup>15</sup> State Papers of Henry VIII.



## MARTYRS THROUGH PRAYERS

BY

A CARTHUSIAN

*The simplicity of the just shall guide them.*—Prov. II, 3.

WHEN, at the beginning of the year 1535, Blessed John Houghton, the Prior of the London Charterhouse, announced to his monks gathered together in Chapter that they must either renounce the authority of the Pope or suffer death, all cried with one mind and one voice: 'Let us all die in our simplicity'. They had lived in simplicity, and it was in simplicity that they wished to die. But what exactly is this simplicity, which is the characteristic mark of every true Carthusian?

At the commencement of his religious life a novice is given, as it were, a guarantee that if he is faithful to the observance of his Rule, he will thereby be enabled to attain to that degree of sanctity to which he has been called by his religious vocation. By this, of course, must be understood, not a mere external observance, which is content with a material fulfilment of the letter of the Rule; but a sincere, internal fidelity, rendered living by a supernatural spirit, enabling the religious to recognise the divine will in even its least prescription. It is in this purity of intention, by which every detail, however commonplace, of religious daily life is referred immediately to God, that true simplicity consists; and it is just this which forms in the religious the internal man, that is to say man living the supernatural life of union with God; which, in a word, brings him to that perfection of charity which is the very end of his religious life.

From this it will be seen that sanctity in religion is considered as something which is very simple, and undoubtedly in the Charterhouse this has always been the case. Yet that is by no means the same as saying that it is quite easy to become a saint, even in religion. It is very simple; but is it very easy to seek God alone in all things, without turning aside by love for any created thing whatsoever, without stopping to consider one's own interests, without being deterred by the opinion of the rest of men, but



sacrificing all things for the glory of God, and performing all one's actions by pure love for him alone?

Undoubtedly, it is not easy; but it was the way which the novices of the London Charterhouse were taught to tread, and those who were faithful in following it did not hesitate to take that final step which gained for them the martyr's crown. On the other hand, those who failed during their lifetime to walk in this way of simplicity found their feet unaccustomed to that hard road when their faith was put to the supreme test: nor did they receive any extraordinary grace to enable them to do in a moment of trial what they had refused to do when sufficient grace had been offered to them during their time of preparation.

At first sight it might seem that our English martyrs had a very clear choice to make, which could leave them in no doubt as to what their duty was, however hard the fulfilment of that duty might seem. Yet, at the actual time, many good men were in doubt as to whether they were really called upon to offer a resistance to the will of their monarch which would cost them their lives. The situation became clearer as the break with Rome became more pronounced; but the Carthusians had been singled out as the first to be put to the test. If they acceded to the king's request, their example would influence others to do the same, since the repute of their community was universally high. If, on the other hand, as actually happened, they refused to acquiesce to the royal demands, then their punishment would serve to deter others from doing likewise. So argued Henry VIII.

On Blessed John Houghton fell the heavy responsibility of being the first to take the decision; and on that decision depended the fate of the community of which he was the head. The saintly Prior was distressed, not because of any anxiety about his own personal welfare, but in regard to the safety of his brethren. So he did what he had always been taught to do in all the difficulties with which he had been faced in his religious life: he had recourse to prayer. And, not content with his own prayers, he engaged the whole community to do likewise. So they all passed a triduum in prayer and spiritual exercises, and finally the Prior celebrated a conventual Mass of the Holy Ghost in order to obtain the grace to fulfil the will and the good pleasure of God. At that Mass the whole community received divine light, encouragement and assistance. Their singleness of purpose overcame any doubts or



hesitations they may have experienced, and they were ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself, for the love of God. In a short time a great work had been accomplished in their souls, and they had arrived at that perfection of charity which had been assigned to them as the goal of their striving. Whereas prayer had always been their principal concern in the Charterhouse of the Salutation of the Mother of God, it now became almost their sole occupation.

Yet, in spite of the fact that the members of that community were so united, each one received that measure of divine light and consolation which he had merited, or which it pleased God to bestow upon the individual soul. Many years previously one of the monks of the Charterhouse had foretold what would befall the community, and he used to say: 'Be of one mind in the House, and in the Lord. They will never overcome you, while you agree with one another.' In fact the whole community would have been ready to die together with their Father Prior; but he knew that this could not be and was greatly disturbed as to the fate of the weaker members. At that time there were about twenty in the House who were less than thirty-eight years old, and these now found themselves deprived, first of their Prior on 4th May, 1535, and then of their Vicar, their Procurator, and Dom Sebastian Newdigate, one of the leading members of the community, on 19th June of the same year. Of these latter it is written: 'And they went to death, as to a banquet, accepting it with great meekness, and patience of heart, alacrity of body, and joyful countenance, in the hope of eternal life', just as Saint Thomas More said to his daughter Margaret of the three Priors who suffered on 4th May. 'Lo! dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed Fathers are now as cheerfully going to their death as bridegrooms to their marriage? . . . For God, considering their long-continued life of most sore and grievous penance, will no longer suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery and iniquity, but speedily hence taketh them to the fruition of his everlasting Deity.'

In the next year, 1536, again on 4th May, four of the most zealous monks were sent by orders of the King's Council to two other Houses of the Order. During two whole years they were harassed in every possible way, until finally the community became divided. Just as before it was their spirit of simplicity which enabled the martyrs to see clearly where their duty lay, so



now it was a lack of that same spirit of simplicity that led the weaker members of the community to take the Oath of Supremacy: 'yet not without great hurt to their consciences, and many tears', as we are told by Dom Maurice Chauncey, who was himself finally induced to take the oath in like manner, in the hope of saving the House. Their hope was entirely ill-founded. Within a year those who had submitted—fifteen choir monks and six laybrothers—were expelled, on 15th November, 1538, and the House was given over to profane uses.

In the meantime, the ten members of the community who had continued to walk in simplicity before God and men were all gaoled on 4th June, 1537. Here they entered into their glory in a short time, owing to the foulness of the place of their confinement, with the exception of a laybrother, Blessed William Horn, who survived for four years. He was at last martyred at Tyburn on 4th August, 1540.

In this story of the London Charterhouse, the defection of the weaker half of the community serves to bring out more clearly the virtues of those who remained faithful till the end. The religious state is called a state of perfection, not because all religious are perfect, but because all oblige themselves by the vows they take at profession to tend to that perfection to which they are called. So, religion is a school of perfection, and all who are diligent and apply themselves to its study can hope to succeed; success depends, after divine grace, upon the good will of the scholar. Simplicity is taught to all; but it is not an iron mould into which all are forced, whether they will it or not. Visitors to the Charterhouse are struck by the simplicity of the life lived within its walls; but they are equally struck by the lack of rigid uniformity in the spirituality which they observe there. Simplicity is a spirit, and as such cannot be enforced: it must be spontaneous, or else it will wither and die.

Chauncey, who was but a young man at the time of his defection, only stumbled momentarily. He repented quickly, and when at length he died in his sixty-eighth year an iron chain was found fastened to his body, a sign of how lastingly he had humbly expiated his fault. One of his most treasured possessions was a manuscript copy of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, in the handwriting of Blessed William Exmew, the Vicar and subsequently the Procurator of the London Charterhouse. This relic, with its



precious associations, providentially came into the possession of the modern English Charterhouse.

'Charity', wrote the author of *The Cloud*, 'meaneth nought else but love of God for himself above all creatures, and of men for God even as thyself. And that in this work God is loved for himself and above all creatures, it seemeth right well. For, as it is said before, the substance of this work is nought else but a naked intent directed unto God himself. A *naked intent* I call it. Because in this work a perfect prentice asketh neither releasing of pain, nor increasing of reward, nor (shortly to say) nought but himself. Insomuch, that he neither recketh nor regardeth whether he be in pain or in bliss, but only that his will be fulfilled whom he loveth.' (c. 24.) Such is the contemplative ideal, which furnishes a sure hierarchy of values to those who seek it. God must be loved above all things for himself alone, and all things else for God's sake, as referred to him. Our fellow men must be loved as ourselves, and we must be prepared to renounce even our own life at the call of Christ. Since as long as we retain our bodily life we have not yet actually shown that we despise all that we possess for sake of that which we have been promised, therefore Saint Thomas concludes that in order to be a martyr it is necessary to suffer death itself for Christ's sake. That depends upon the will and good pleasure of God; but the simplicity of heart which is engendered by the assiduous pursuit of this ideal disposes the soul for martyrdom, should the call ever come: and, if it does not, leads the soul to that perfection of charity which is the goal of life here below. May we all die in that simplicity!



## MARTYRS IN TRAINING

BY

THOMAS HARPER

**B**EHIND the more dramatic features of the history of the Church in England during Elizabeth's reign—threatened military intervention by Phillip of Spain, the excommunication of Elizabeth, the rise and fall of her many suitors and the rather spectral presence of Mary Stuart beyond the northern border—lies the unfailing influence of the missionary priests. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the fact that Catholicism in England did not suffer the fate it has met in the Scandinavian countries is to be attributed to them more than to any other element of the Counter-Reformation movement. At a time when the ranks of the old Marian clergy were thinned by death, life imprisonment or banishment and the strength of the Elizabethan administration was concentrated with a particular violence against the priesthood, the Mass and the sacraments, Fr William Allen conceived the idea of founding a seminary at Douai.

Born in the year of Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn, William Allen's career had carried him into the academic atmosphere of an Oxford which was still to a large extent Catholic in practice and outlook, but it had given him no less a deep acquaintance with conditions throughout the country. For his zeal as a kind of lay missionary in Lancashire and Norfolk during the greater part of the years 1562 to 1565 he had received special mention in a writ issued by the Queen as 'Alen who wrote the late booke of Purgatory'. Outlawed, he fled to Malines, where in the latter year he was ordained priest. Three years later he had founded Douai College, the first of a series of English colleges on the Continent and the first seminary to be created and organised on the principles laid down by the Council of Trent. In every detail of its administration he showed an extraordinary ability and singleness of mind.

It is strange now to reflect that the college which we remember almost exclusively as the training ground of missionary priests and martyrs was not created for that purpose. In 1568, when the Dominican Pope, Pius V, gave it his approval within a few weeks



of its foundation, the delusion was still widely shared among English exiles on the Continent that there would soon be a change in the fortunes of the Church in this country—the Pope would bring their heretical queen and her government to judgment, she would die and Mary of Scotland would succeed to the throne, even perhaps that divine grace would work a miraculous change of heart in Elizabeth or her betrothal to a Catholic prince a change of practice. Accordingly we find Allen in a reminiscent mood writing to the Regius Professor of Canon Law at Douai University several years after the event that his purpose was to establish a college on the Continent which would combine the functions of a Catholic Oxford, a school for boys and a seminary where priests could be trained ‘to restore religion [in England] when the proper moment should arrive’. Douai was to create a reserve of clergy on the Continent and not to maintain an uninterrupted flow of priests to supplement the dwindling numbers of the Marian clergy. ‘It seemed hopeless’, Allen wrote, ‘to attempt anything while the heretics were masters there’. Only six years later, in 1574, when the government were no less, but if anything more, in command in England the first three missionary priests landed from Douai. By 1580, a hundred Douai priests were ministering to the needs of Catholics in England. In the following year forty-three priests were ordained at the College; almost all went on the mission and fifteen were subsequently martyred. The change of policy had come immediately for in the year in which the College was founded Dr Vendeville wrote that its course of studies had been formulated to equip priests ‘for promoting the Catholic cause in England even at the peril of the lives’.

Martyrdom quickly became a major preoccupation in the life of the College. In 1577 Fr Cuthbert Maine, the protomartyr of Douai, was put to death at Launceston and the practice of celebrating a Mass of thanksgiving and singing the *Te Deum* in the College chapel as news of a martyrdom was received began. The three years’ course of study was so arranged that the students might ‘glean therefrom an understanding of the fortitude of the martyrs’ and ‘prepare for the priesthood... at the present time an office contemptible in the world’s eyes and perilous’. Allen had no delusion now about the policy he was to pursue; nor could he have had any doubts as to its success. Already in 1575 he had received from England evidence of the influence which the



missionary priests were exerting: 'He who almost alone holds the rudder of the State has privately admitted to one of his friends that for one staunch Catholic at the beginning of the reign there were now he knew for certain ten'.

Historians have tended to give prominence to events like the Archpriest controversy and the 'stirs' at Wisbeach, the differences of opinion at Douai and in Rome, the political intrigues and the protestations of misplaced allegiance. The same light has not been thrown on the enormity of the sacrifice the missionary priests made for a purpose that would have been meaningless had it been at all self-centred. This was true even of Allen's contemporaries. We find him, in a letter dated 1570 to Fr Chauncey, a former Prior of the London Charterhouse, defending the missionary priests 'whose faults many a man spieth that prayeth not for them as most men mark their misses and few consider what dangers they be in... which pains few men pity as they should do and not many reward them as they ought to do'. Under the circumstances in which they had to work in England, no system of training devised by men could have made the returning exiles entirely immune to the moral dangers of the English mission—to the isolation of their lives so disarmingly in contrast with the community life in Douai; to their natural recoil from physical suffering, actual and anticipated; to the overwhelming strength and power of the heresy they were out to crush; to the accumulated effect upon the people of years of persecution and deprivation of the practices of their religion. Yet when 'the expense is reckoned', the return it gave is an eloquent tribute to the training they had received at Douai. Campion's simple phrase 'gathering virtue and knowledge' expresses the essence of Allen's purpose and no less of his achievement.

In a letter in which he defined his aims, Allen wrote that his students, who were never regarded simply as students for the priesthood but as men specifically 'intended for the English harvest', were 'not required to excel or to be great proficientes in theological science... but they must abound in zeal for God's house, charity and thirst for souls'. Elsewhere he writes that 'having burning zeal even though deep science be wanting... [they can] do good work in hearing confessions and offering sacrifice *which are the points to which we especially direct our instructions*'. And a contemporary wrote of Cuthbert Maine, the proto-martyr of



Douai, that 'none of those whom Mr Maine reconciled to the Church could ever be induced to renounce the Catholic faith which they had learned from so good a master'.

Every day at Douai began with the recitation of the litanies of the Church for the conversion of England followed at 5 a.m. by Mass. Confessions were made and Communion was received every Sunday and on greater feasts. Although this was rather in advance of contemporary practice, Allen never ceased to exhort his students to confess and communicate more frequently. Priests said Mass daily and the whole community fasted on two days out of every week. Thus they acquired that detachment which so impressed Edmund Campion on his arrival at Douai: 'Sixty men and youths of the greatest promise... eating so pleasantly a little broth thickened merely with the commonest roots, that you could have sworn they were feasting on stewed prunes and raisins, English delicacies'. The students' minds had little opportunity to dwell on the lack of English delicacies; every day there were two readings at the mid-day and evening meals, one from the Old and one from the New Testaments, of such a length that in the three years normally spent at Douai the former was covered twelve times and the latter sixteen. After the meal a professor would give a commentary on the passage the community had just had read to them. The study of the Scriptures inevitably held a special place in the training of men who were to meet the English Reformers on their own ground. Every day there was a lecture on the exegesis of a passage especially relevant to the doctrinal controversies raging in this country at the time, papal and royal supremacy, purgatory, the Mass, grace and devotion to our Lady. Greek and Hebrew were taught as a safeguard against 'the sophisms the heretics extract from the properties and meanings of words', but for the sake of the common people the future missionaries were required to learn the Scriptures and to deliver their sermons in the vernacular as their opponents were already doing to advantage. Allen was in many ways ahead of his time, and while (in a letter on the study of the Scriptures) he was prepared to concede that it might have been 'more desirable had they never been translated into barbarous tongues', he suggests that the time for such regrets is past. Now the need is for an authorised translation into English—a recommendation which was to see its fulfilment in the Douai Bible.



'Non in dialectica complacuit Deo saluum facere populum suum' served however to restore a balance which was inevitably displaced only too easily in favour of controversy and 'scientific' theology. Long before the idea of a seminary abroad first took shape, continental printing presses operated by English exiles were pouring out a rich harvest of tracts and counterblasts. The seminaries were founded with another kind of propaganda in mind. Since 'all the labourers we send', Allen wrote, 'are employed in administering the sacraments and above all things in hearing confessions (for the people have hardly any pastors now left but them), we take care that they are most carefully instructed in the whole catechism and in pastoral matters... and that all parts of our religion but especially the marvellous power and authority of the Sovereign Pontiff should be better known and more devoutly and purely honoured than it used to be. All were instructed in the way of using the Blessed Virgin's Rosary with the meditations attached to it... that by understanding these things themselves they may be more fit to explain them hereafter to the simple people.' The Statute of 1571 specifically attacked the wearing of scapulars and the *Agnus Dei*, to which Pope Gregory XIII had attached special indulgences associated with prayers for the conversion of England 'for all places beyond the Alps'.

In 1584 the Act of the 27th of Elizabeth was passed by which it was declared high treason for any priest ordained abroad to come into the kingdom and death was the penalty for anyone who harboured or in any way assisted them. Even though in the decade which followed the passing of this Act the persecution of the clergy reached a level of unprecedented severity, it did not dash the confidence which characterised the Counter-Reformation period. Edmund Campion, the Jesuit martyr who had himself been a student at Douai, wrote in the *Brag* he addressed to the government when he landed in England that 'the expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun, it is of God, it cannot be withstood'. Individually the missionary priests might suffer death but it was 'their posterity that would never die'. Martyrdom created vocations and every martyr a fresh landing on the English coast so that at the height of the persecution, when the fortunes of the Church were humanly speaking at their lowest, Campion was able to assert with an unusual combination of charity and assurance that 'many innocent hands are lifted up to heaven for you daily



by those English students... who beyond seas gathering virtue and sufficient knowledge for the purpose are determined never to give you [the persecutors] over but either to win you heaven or to die upon your pikes... to the end we may at last be friends in heaven when all injuries shall be forgotten'.



## WORDS OF THE MARTYRS

THOMAS MORE (Martyred at Tower Hill, 1535):

Serve God for love, then, not for hope of meed;  
 What service may so desirable be  
 As where all turneth to thine own speed?  
 Who is so good, so lovely eke as he  
 Who hath already done so much for thee,  
 As he that first thee made, and on the rood  
 Eft thee redeemed with his own precious blood?

ROBERT SOUTHWELL, S.J. (Martyred at Tyburn, 1595):

My chiefest delight is to be used as God wills, and to have his pleasure and providence fully accomplished in me, which is the end for which I was created and for which I do live. To attain this resignation, it is a very fit way to debate and discourse with myself, what thing there is could happen to me, though never so much against my liking, which if it should fall out would trouble me, or make me lose that indifferency which I ought to have, in most willingly yielding myself to whatsoever God shall lay upon me; and if I find anything which I think should not well digest, nor accept with due patience, let me endeavour to overcome myself in it, and by prayer and meditation seeke to win the difficulty thereof, that there may be nothing which I could not willingly accept at God's hands, how contrary soever it were to my inclination.



## THE MARTYRS' FRIENDS

### The Work of the Laity

BY

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

THE apostolate of the Missionary Priests would have been impossible without the heroic co-operation of the lay Catholics. As in the early Church, the faith lived in the houses of the faithful. No less than eighty laymen and women—a quarter of the whole—find a place in the calendar of the martyrs. But there were many who suffered a slow martyrdom in prison, under conditions inconceivable to us, and whose sufferings have received scant recognition. The names of ten layfolk who died in prison are among the *Dilati* (those whose causes have been postponed through lack of evidence), but this list is woefully incomplete. There were many others who spent most of their lives in prison, but were let out to die. Richard Wenster, the Yorkshire schoolmaster, and Francis Tregian were there for more than thirty years. Thomas Pound, after a similar ordeal, was sentenced in his old age to lose his ears for protesting against the martyrdom of Laurence Bailey in 1604. The sentence was commuted, but he had his ears nailed to the pillory in London and Lancaster. Roland Jenks the printer was sentenced to be nailed to the pillory by his ears and to release himself by cutting them off with his own hand. Yet none of these are martyrs properly so-called.

Perhaps the best way to bring home to us the sufferings of the lay Catholics is to follow the fortunes of a single family, with the proviso that such an account, far from being exceptional, could be matched from almost any county in England.

The Bellamys lived at Uxenden Hall in the parish of Harrow-on-the-Hill. They owned a second house at Preston in the same parish, a 'garden house' in the Barbican, and another at Kentish Town 'near Pancras church by Holborn Fields'. In September 1581, when Edmund Campion lay in the Tower, broken with torture, awaiting his trial and martyrdom, the celebrated Douai professor, Richard Bristow, having contracted consumption, returned to seek a cure in his native air. It was a dangerous time



to give shelter to a priest, especially to one whose famous *Motives* had so incensed the government, but Bristow was received at Uxenden Hall. His native air was unavailing. He died in the house of Jerome Bellamy on October 14th and was secretly buried in Harrow church by another priest. Jerome's wife was Catherine, daughter of William Page, also of Harrow, a recusant who was to spend many years in prison and a relative of Francis Page, S.J., who was martyred in 1602. Jerome died before 1586 and his widow ran the house at Uxenden. Her eldest son Richard lived at Preston, and her second son Robert at Kentish Town. It was in this last-named house that William Thompson, alias Blackburn, was captured while saying Mass in January 1586, and he was martyred on April 20th. Robert Bellamy was sent to Newgate.

In August 1586 four of the conspirators in the Babington Plot were hidden for three days at Uxenden, and when the search grew too hot they removed to Richard's house at Preston, where they were captured. For this 'crime' Catherine was sentenced to death, but died in the Tower before the sentence could be carried out; her son Jerome was executed on September 21st with the conspirators, and another son (probably Bartholomew) was tortured to death in the Tower. There had been two priests at Uxenden at the time of the search, Fr Davies the chaplain and Fr Thomas Holford, but they managed to escape. In the following year, however, Holford was captured in Cheshire and brought up to London by two pursuivants. They spent the night at an inn in Holborn, where the pursuivants dined well but not wisely. At five the next morning Holford got up, pulled a yellow stocking on one leg and a white boot on the other and strode up and down the room. The pursuivants awoke out of a drunken slumber, eyed this strange spectacle and dropped to sleep again. Holford slipped quietly out of the inn, raced down Holborn hill, where he was taken for a madman, and reached Gray's Inn Fields. Here he removed his motley, and made his way barefooted over very rough country to Uxenden, arriving late at night having eaten nothing. 'His feet were galled with gravel stones', writes the chaplain there, Fr Davies, 'and his legs all scratched with briars and thorns (for he dared not keep to the highway), so that the blood flowed in some places. The gentleman and mistress of the house caused a bath of sweet herbs to be made, and their two daughters washed and bathed his legs and feet, after which he



went to bed.' Next year he was captured again and martyred at Clerkenwell on August 28th, 1588.

Meanwhile, as we have seen, Richard's brother Robert was languishing in Newgate. In the summer of 1586 an exile named George Stoker, who had lived for twenty years in France as a servant of the earl of Westmoreland, came over to fetch the earl's daughter. He was arrested and sent to the Tower and six months later, in February 1587, removed to Newgate. By then there was another recusant in Newgate, Thomas Heath of Fulham, who had better tell the story himself, as he told it in a letter to his brother-in-law, Anthony Standen:

'I thought it my part to make you acquainted with my misfortunes, which have happened by the cruelty of our English heretics, who, hunting me and my wife your sister from place to place and not permitting us to rest long anywhere quietly, at length spying their opportunity, in my absence, by the aid and assistance of Sir John Bowes, brake up my doors and put my wife into such a fear that within five days after she departed this world. After which they assessed all my goods for the Queen and laid wait for me, and not long after by great misfortune apprehended me. After divers examinations touching the Queen of Scots, the gentlemen that were executed for her cause [i.e. Babington and the other thirteen], and lastly touching the coming of the Spanish army, I was committed by warrant of seven of the council to Newgate, from whence I should have been carried to be condemned and after executed. But Mr Stoker, Mr Bellamy and myself joining together found means to break out of prison the Wednesday before the sessions which was on Friday following, which was but one week before Candlemas last part [1589].'

The three escaped prisoners made their way to Scotland and thence to Germany. In October 1589 Robert Bellamy set out from Cologne on pilgrimage to Rome, carrying letters of recommendation to English exiles at Milan, Florence, Bologna and Rome, including the letter just quoted. He had not gone far before he was stayed by the officials of Duke Casimir, Palgrave of the Rhine. The letters were discovered and copies were sent to England. One of the original letters, a Latin one, still survives (B. M. Lansd. 96 no. 16), and there are two copies of the others (ib. and S.P. 81/5, fol. 229). The English government requested his extradition, and we can imagine with what bitter disappointment



he returned under escort to England, to rot in the Marshalsea prison for another ten long weary years.

This was tribulation enough for one family, but the saddest trial was still to come. Richard Bellamy had two sons and three daughters. The youngest, Anne, who was probably one of those who bathed a martyr's feet, was imprisoned in the Gatehouse in 1592 for not coming to church. Here she came under the influence of that odious sadist and priest-hunter, Richard Topcliffe, who robbed her of her Faith and her virginity. He carried her off to Stanion (Northants) to the house of William Brudenell, who had married his sister, and then to his own house at Somerby (Lincs), where he married her to one of his disreputable underlings, a weaver's son named Nicholas Jones. She seems to have lost all sense of decency and stooped to the lowest crime of all: she agreed to betray her own family. She told Topcliffe of the priests who had been hidden in her father's house, and the location of all the hiding holes. Armed with this exact knowledge he visited Uxenden on June 20th 1592 and made the greatest capture of his career, the gentle Jesuit poet and martyr Robert Southwell, who was martyred on February 21st 1595. For the offence of harbouring him, Richard Bellamy and his wife were sent to the Gatehouse, his two sons to St Catherines, and his two remaining daughters, Audrey and Mary, to the Clink. The rigours of confinement to some extent broke their resistance. The parents and the sons promised to go to church and were released. The daughters, however, stood firm and though released gave no promises of conformity. In July 1594 they were visited at Uxenden by Richard Young the notorious persecutor, who found that Catherine and her two sons 'do go to church every Sunday' but would not take Communion. Her two daughters however did not go to church. They were examined also. Audrey said that 'her conscience will not give her to go to church, and (so far as she can remember) she was never at church in all her life-time, and refuseth also now to go, or to have conference'. Mary said she had not been to church these fourteen years, and was equally obstinate. The sequel was inevitable: they were immediately committed to the Gatehouse, where they are described as 'mere recusants, not dangerous'.

Later, both the parents repented of their frailty. Catherine died for her faith in the Marshalsea 'and the dead corpse was



brought to Harrow church and there buried obscurely and not according to the laws of this land or her majesty's injunctions'. In 1599 Richard was in prison again and his brother Robert was still languishing in the Marshalsea. Eventually Richard managed to cross to Flanders, where he died in abject poverty. One of the charges against him in 1599 may well serve as his epitaph.

'He hath spent all his living in relieving Jesuits and seminary priests..... Also the said Bellamy is and hath been for these twenty years and more a continual harbourer, lodger and host of recusants, their children and servants, keeping them at board, diet and lodging, so that there are few recusants in England of any account but have been succoured and lodged in his house, and neither these nor any of his own family have come to their parish church.'



### A SONG OF FOUR PRIESTS

[The Song from which these stanzas are taken is found in a contemporary manuscript book of ballads in the British Museum (Add. 15225). It contains thirty-three stanzas, mostly concerned with the martyrs of the early Church. It has been printed in full by H. E. Rollins in *Old English Ballads*, p. 71. The four martyrs here commemorated are Robert Nutter of Clitheroe (Lancs.) who became a Dominican while a prisoner at Wisbech, Edward Thwinge, Thurstan Hunt and Robert Middleton, all of Yorkshire. The two first suffered 26th July, 1600; the others in March 1601, all four at Lancaster. The sheriff who attended the execution of the first pair wrote to the Earl of Salisbury: 'I do not doubt but much good will come by this little severity, as well to terrify the priests from those parts as for satisfaction of the people'. But the Song rather suggests that the effect was quite otherwise, and it shows us how the memory of the martyrs was kept alive, when it was impossible to publish any account of them.—G.A.]

### A SONG OF FOURE PREISTES THAT SUFFERED DEATH AT LANCASTER

(To the tune of *Daintie come thou to me*)

O God of thy great might, strengthen our frailtie soe  
Stoutlie to stand in feight, against our infernall foe.  
They Campe in order standes, where many a Champion bould  
In their victorious handes, eternall Triumph hould.



In this our English coast, much blessed blood is shed;  
 Two hundred priestes almost, in our time martered.  
 And manie lay men dye, with Joyfull sufferance  
 Manie moe in prison lye, Godes cause for to advance.

Amongst these gracious troope, that follow Christ his traine  
 To cause the Devill stoupe, foure preistes were latlie slaine  
 Nutters bould constancie, with his sweete fellow Thwinge  
 Of whose most meeke modestie, angels & saintes may singe.

Huntes hawtie corage staut, with godlie zeale soe true,  
 Myld Middleton, O what tonge, can halfe they virtues shew.  
 At Lancaster lovingly, these marters tooke their end,  
 In glorious victorie, true faith for to defende.

And thus hath Lancashyre, offered her sacrifice  
 To daunt their lewde desyre, & please our Saviours eies.  
 For by this meanes, I trust, truth shall have victorie  
 When as that number Just, of such saintes compleat bee.

Whose sacred members rent, & quarters set on hye  
 Cause more to be content, In the same cause to dye,  
 Whose lives whyle they did live, whose blessed deaths alsoe  
 Doe admonishion give, what way we ought to goe.

If we should them despise, as manie wretches doe  
 We should contempne lykewise, our blessed Saviour too.  
 Let their examples then, move our hartes to relent,  
 These are most blessed men, whom God to us hath sent.

Godes holie truth they taught, & sealed it with their blood  
 Dyinge with torments fraught, and all to doe us good.  
 Let lyinge heresie, with her false lye billes lout [mock]  
 Truth will have victorie, through such mild champions stout.

Praise be to Godes good will, whoe doth his truthe defend,  
 Lord, to thy vineyard still, such worthie workmen send.  
 And good lord grant us grace, that we may constant bee  
 With our Crosse in each place, to please thy majestie.

All laud & glorie great, be to the Trinitie,  
 In his eternall seat, one god in persones three,



And to the Virgin mild, the Queene of heaven hye  
With Jesus her lovinge Child, in all eternitie.

Unto all prophetes meeke, to Christes Apostles deere,  
Marters, Confessors eake, and to all virgins cleare  
And unto each of them, crowned in their degree  
With Joy in Jerusalem, godes blessed face to see.

*finis.*



## THE MARTYRS' ALTAR

A SERMON PREACHED AFTER THE CONSECRATION  
OF THE HIGH ALTAR IN THE CHURCH OF ST PETER  
THE APOSTLE, AT EYNHAM, ON THE FEAST OF  
ST PETER'S CHAINS, 1950

By

IVO THOMAS, O.P.

*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure was taken for misery: and their going away from us, for utter destruction: but they are in peace. And though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality.—*Wisdom, chapter 3.

IN the splendid ceremony at which we have been assisting, there are two elements: the dedication of the altar and the burying of the relics of martyrs in that altar. At some periods and in some parts of the Catholic world these two elements have been so distinguished that they have even taken place on different days. Since this is the Feast of St Peter's Chains, and St Peter, Apostle and Martyr and first Bishop of Rome, is our great patron, I propose to dwell chiefly on the most Roman of these two elements, which were not conflated as they are now until the Middle Ages; and the most Roman of them is the enshrining of the relics of the martyrs in the altar of sacrifice. It was not till after the Roman Empire had officially recognised the legality of



the Catholic religion in the early fourth century that we were able to have permanent churches and fixed altars; and then the churches were at first dedicated, set apart for the worship of God in the celebration of Mass, simply by the decree of the Christian Emperor handing them over to religious uses. And the altars which it was the main purpose of those churches to house, were considered sufficiently hallowed by the celebration of Mass upon them. How indeed could they be more or better hallowed?

But during the years of persecution it had early become the practice to offer the Holy Sacrifice upon the tombs of the faithful departed, and especially upon the tombs of those who had borne witness to the truth and life of God that was in them by the shedding of their blood unto death—those whom we call above all others ‘the Martyrs’, ‘the witnesses’. In this way the faithful still on earth, in their great act of worship, associated themselves and felt themselves associated with those faithful ones who had gone before, dying in the peace of God but needing still for their entry into heaven the prayers of those on earth; associated themselves and felt themselves associated with those others who, by their supreme act of fidelity in accepting violent death rather than forswear their God and Saviour, were in their heavenly glory already able to join their prayers to the pleadings of those who sought to follow in their path. Thus the whole of Christ’s Church, militant on earth, suffering in purgatory, triumphant in heaven, was linked in the perpetuation of the memory of his redeeming sacrifice, through which the fruits of his passion and death, fruits of example, fruits of grace and holiness and help, were made, as they still are made, available to the world he died to save.

Eventually, and before very long, this privilege of having the body and blood of Christ offered on the tomb was confined to the Martyrs, and it became necessary, if this dear and familiar practice was to be continued, to bring their bodies or relics to the church, instead of building the church over their last resting-place. And so we find their remains being conducted to their new sepulchre with triumphal procession such as befits the memory of their glorious constancy and close sharing in the blessed Passion of their Master. Their grave, like any other Catholic grave, had to be blessed, and so as with any other, but with more solemnity, it was washed with Holy Water and made fragrant with incense; it was even anointed with Holy Oil, as, in one old tradition of



Rome, were the breasts of the dead. Henceforth their sacred remains will rest beneath the stone of sacrifice, a perpetual reminder to the worshippers that he whose body and blood are offered thereon claims their allegiance too so long as life shall last, and that the power of his death is also at *their* disposal to bring them to the crown of life everlasting.

We have all, as our patron St Peter tells us in his first Epistle, been 'regenerated unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for us who by the power of God are kept by faith unto salvation. Then, he goes on, you will be triumphant. What if you have trials of many sorts to sadden your hearts in this brief interval?' It was in the consciousness of that living hope that the martyrs withstood their terrible trials and came to their triumph which we are celebrating. And there have been martyrs in every age of the Church. In her first three hundred years more than half the time was a time of widespread and active persecution. It has been calculated that till the peace of Constantine 129 years were years of persecution and 120 years were of partial though never complete tolerance. And the years of worst persecution were so spread through the rest that there was not a single generation that had not the example of ever-renewed martyrdom before its eyes.

Catechetical instruction was designed to prepare the faithful for this very real possibility, so that we find simple and unlettered people of every age and both sexes with answers to their judges ready on their lips—answers which they not only proclaimed in court, but continued to assert under the prolonged tortures to which they were often subjected before gaining the release of death. Little books of passages from Sacred Scripture were written and circulated to strengthen their faith and their hope. 'Blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.' 'There is no need to fear those who kill the body, but have no means of killing the soul; fear him more who has the power to ruin body and soul in hell.' 'Whoever acknowledges me before men, I too will acknowledge him before my Father who is in heaven, and whoever disowns me before men, before my Father in heaven I too will disown him.' 'He is not worthy of me, that loves father or mother more; he is not worthy of me, that loves son or daughter more; he is not worthy of me



that does not take up his cross and follow me. He who secures his own life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake that will secure it.' 'Every man that has forsaken home or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive his reward a hundredfold and obtain everlasting life.'

The preparation for a very possible martyrdom was not only moral and intellectual; it was also physical. Deliberate practice of severe fasting and physical privation hardened the Christian against the day when, to use our Lord's words to St Peter, 'another would gird him and lead him whither he would not'—taking him to slow death amid the filth and squalor and starvation and actual torture of the roughest prisons.

They armed themselves deliberately, of course, with the power and strength of the sacraments. St Cyprian in Africa, himself a future martyr, says: 'Since a new persecution is at hand, let us be ready and armed for the combat. Let us not leave unarmed and defenceless those whom we urge on to the fray; let us unite them by the protection of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, refreshing them with the divine nourishment that is to be found in the Eucharist, their safeguard and wall of defence against the enemy.' Again and again we find them extremely conscious of what the sacraments had done to them. They had been reborn in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, dedicated and sealed to be temples of the Holy Spirit, enlightened by his presence, made houses of prayer. They had, in a word, been made Christians, other Christs. 'It is Christ,' they said, adapting St Paul's words, 'who suffers in me.' All that the judges could get out of one woman was: 'I am a Christian.' 'What is your name?' the judge asked her. 'What good is it to know my name? I am a Christian.' 'What is your master's name?' 'He is only the master of my body; the master of my soul is God.' And a man, on being asked, 'Who are you?', answered: 'Caesar's slave, but a Christian, having received freedom from Christ and by his grace having the same hope as these'—who stood beside him in the dock.

The Church has had such martyrs in every age, and our own times are comparable with those early centuries of the Church in this respect, and they look as though they will continue to be so. We see even in our day already a flowering of that desire for the prize of martyrdom which was so marked a feature of the



spirituality of the early centuries. And the other element in our ceremony of consecration should remind us of the truth that shone so brightly in our martyred brethren of every age, the truth of what it is to be a Christian. For that is why we have baptised this altar with Holy Water, and anointed it with the Oil of Confirmation, and encircled it with clouds of incense—to impress on ourselves that by our baptism and confirmation we are consecrated as temples in which clouds of prayer must ascend, in which the sacrifice of Christ must be continually offered, so that everything we think and desire and do and say and suffer is united to his total offering of himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. As we renew his sacrifice upon this holy table, not only today, but every day that we do it, let us see to it that all that is done there is being reflected in our lives. The new birth of baptism, the strengthening of confirmation has been accomplished in us once and for all; but the clouds of prayer must go up continually, and the following of Christ upon the way of the Cross, even to the hour of death however it may come, that too must never cease. The example of the martyrs whose bones lie buried here is ever before us, bearing witness that though in the sight of men we suffer torments, our hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in few things we shall be well rewarded, when God has tried us and found us worthy of himself.

The strong Son of God, whose plea for mercy on a sinful world was heard upon the Cross, will, if we live united to him, hear us too in our needs, as he hears and has ever heard the cries of the martyrs amid their sufferings. My Jesus, mercy! Mary, my loving mother, pray for me! St Peter, Prince of the Apostles and glorious martyr, come to my aid!



## REVIEWS

CATHOLIC LONDON. By Douglas Newton. (Robert Hale; 21s.)

I have shared, metaphorically speaking, so many Distributist plat-forms with the author of *Catholic London* that he will forgive me for wondering how to begin a phrase in my head ending: 'he was a very pious antiquarian . . . ' before I had even opened the book! Moreover, when I had done so and, turning to some paragraphs about 'The Ship' (the inn which still occupies its old site in Little Turnstile), read how Bishop Challoner had once sat there preaching to the company, 'each having a pot of beer on the table before him so that, should the law break in, it would find only a normal gathering of customers', I felt more assured that a restrained parody of G.K.C.'s *Logical Vegetarian* would be proper to my review. But, no! Preaching and piety are there, respect for antiquity and the love of London not less so; but much, much more: here is a book with even the necessary dry-as-dust information converted into the rich tapestry of the Faith.

I have read this amazing work, no longer to be a little bit superior to the annual walk, organized by the Guild of Ransom, from the Tower of Tyburn, nor to wonder that Cheapside should have been once known as 'the street of Saints'—had it not seen 'penitents, bare-foot, sombrely clad and bearing great wax candles, pacing behind church and legal officers in public expiation of faults'; and witnessed also 'many a rogue whipped at the cart-tail, and Blessed Edmund Campion and other martyrs bound on that dolorous and glorious way that ended at Tyburn': Then, for two pages, Douglas Newton enriches his work with nostalgic pictures of what the hands of 'furious and zealous people' could do in attacking the 'idolatrous cross of Chepe'.

There is enough history and holiness in the two chapters alone on Newgate and the Tower of London to put the reader for ever in debt to the author, and to make us amazed at our heritage and at the heavy price so cheerfully paid for the liberties we so thoughtlessly enjoy. No more fitting and faithful work could commemorate the Centenary of the Restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in England, nor one more suitable to the needs of Catholic visitors to London for the less exciting centenary this year. The Festival of Britain will be enjoyed more fully under Douglas Newton's tutorship, since he has made the very stones cry out their praise; and may there be many hosts to take advantage of this most Christian guide-book before venturing to show visitors our London's bombed and devious ways.

P.S. As I end this note Douglas Newton's death is announced; may he rest in peace not unmindful of our debt.

H. D. C. PEPLER



UTOPIA AND A DIALOGUE OF COMFORT. By Sir Thomas More. (Everyman Library, No. 461, Dent; 3s. 6d.)

It is good to see that Everyman's have reissued More's *Utopia* and the *Dialogue of Comfort*. I have always been struck by the fact that this edition, published in 1910, was classified under Theology and Philosophy. Were the editors really informed or were they acting wiser than they knew?

*Utopia* is indeed a difficult book. With few exceptions it has been the subject of commentaries by scholars who knew little of More's theological background or of his life of sanctity. All such attempts to interpret *Utopia* are fore-doomed to failure. But people with little knowledge of St Thomas's other writings will continue to read *Utopia*. To include the *Dialogue*, More's greatest work perhaps, within the same cover provides the student with some sort of opportunity to get a balanced view of the writings of this greatest of Englishmen.

The spelling has been modernised in this edition and it contains a new introduction by Mr John Warrington which is a very brilliant little study. My sole criticism is of the bibliography. Dorner's *Meaning of Utopia* should surely be included under the critical studies while the omission of the E.E.T.S. edition of Harpfield's *Life of More* is even more surprising.

BERNARD FISHER

THE GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD. By Joseph Duhr, S.J. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

In 1946 Fr Joseph Duhr, S.J. wrote *La Glorieuse Assomption de la Mère de Dieu*, mainly to answer Dr Ernst and to show that the Assumption could be proclaimed as a dogma of faith. It was, inevitably, the sort of essay that presupposed not only a French, Catholic background in the reader but also a certain familiarity with theological thought and, above all, with the manner in which the French conduct their controversies. That this should have been translated and offered to English readers as 'A history and explanation of the Dogma from the earliest times to its proclamation as an Article of Faith' seems to be particularly unfortunate.

Fr Duhr no doubt intended the book as something rather better than an *oeuvre de vulgarisation*, yet not as a complete treatise on the subject. In English, with its 382 footnotes, it gives a misleading impression of definitive authority.

For students (who will not be misled by the words 'First published in 1951') it will be sufficient to note that nothing later than 1947 is quoted. The presentation is unexpectedly below standard. It is admittedly difficult to English this kind of book, but this translation hardly



attains the minimum of English idiom; and even the rules of grammar have not always been respected.

Two things among many seem to invite protest: the idea that the Church of Rome *annexes* a devotion and proceeds to make it universal, and the notion that the last stage in the progress of a doctrine is repression by the Church of all opposition. No doubt the author would disclaim both these things, as expressed in these English words; the translator, alas, does not seem to have hesitated on that account.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST. By John of St Thomas. Translated from the Latin by Dominic Hughes, O.P. With a Foreword by Walter Farrell, O.P. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

It was a venture of faith to publish this treatise in English and at so reasonable a price. For in spite of the widespread and increasing interest in thomism, it is still difficult to bring readers back to the texts of the Angelic Doctor himself, and even then many are put off by the forms in which his thought is expressed. At first sight, John of St Thomas seems wholly concerned to distinguish and speculate without more than a passing reference to the sources of revelation and to defend the doctrine of the master mainly by philosophical arguments against long-forgotten critics. At the end of a long and critical survey of the history of the theology of the gifts, Père Jacques de Blic was recently constrained to ask, 'When shall we refrain from putting on the same level in our systems that which is a vital development of revealed truth and that which is a purely human, cultural or philosophical addition?' (*Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, January-June, 1946, p. 179.) There is some justification for this outburst, but a patient application to the work of this very great and devout theologian, faithful exponent of St Thomas and even more a penetrating student of the divine word, can only increase our appreciation of the riches of the deposit of faith and our understanding of the structure of the human soul intent upon the divine and elevated to move Godwards under the impulse of the Spirit of God.

When God speaks, every word counts. And if he considered human nature a fit instrument to be transformed by grace, all the resources of philosophy must be pressed into service to give some kind of intelligible account both of that nature as *elevabilis* and of the wonderful adaptation by the Holy Ghost of its powers and dispositions. That is why John of St Thomas makes much of an occasional text of Scripture and so carefully distinguishes between the varied acts of the soul, the possibilities of perfection which remain even after the infusion of the virtues, and the definite types of response which must be given to the one breath of the Spirit. The distinction, for instance, between the simple



assent of faith and the judgment exercised on the truths of faith by the soul to which these things have become connatural through the gift of the Spirit is not without justification in Scripture and is eminently satisfying as a psychological account of the quest of the keen and loving mind. It is good, too, to be reminded of the wealth contained in those books of the Old Testament which have so much to say of the wisdom that comes from God; although reckoned by Protestants among the Apocrypha, for Catholic theologians they provide precisely that 'fond de données traditionnelles' on which, Père de Blic maintains, any learned doctrinal structure should be firmly based.

Fr Hughes's translation is a noble piece of work, faithful to the original, but yet rendering this seventeenth-century author alive and interesting for our contemporaries. His introduction also provides a very necessary account of the life and work of John of St Thomas and indicates his place among the greatest minds in the history of theology. There are very full indexes of subjects, names and Scriptural references. The production and printing are almost perfect, but there is an obvious, but unfortunate, misprint in the very last line.

EDWARD QUINN.

LE POÈME DE LA PARFAITE CONSÉCRATION À MARIE. By M.-Th. Poupon. (Librarie du Sacré Cœur, Lyon, 1947; pp. 665.)

A JÉSUS PAR MARIE. By the same author. (Lyon, 1948; pp. 191.)

There can be no doubt that in spite of frequent reimpressions of St Louis Grignon de Montfort's *Treatise on True Devotion*, and its use by the Legion of Mary, many English Catholics feel ill at ease with the teachings of the Saint or at least with its seemingly exaggerated expression. At the same time it must be remembered that the Church holds the works of the Saint to be free from doctrinal error, so that, at most, it can only be the expression of the doctrine and not the teaching itself which may cause discomfort. The principal expression to which exception is taken seems to be that of 'slave of Mary'.

In the first of the two works mentioned above, Fr Poupon has studied the perfect consecration to our Lady, or rather to our Lord through our Lady, in its theological background, and at the same time, has illustrated his explanations with copious extracts from the works of St Louis himself and from other spiritual writers of the *École française*, whose works were the sources whence St Louis drew his teaching. Strangely enough, the perfect consecration is not attached to the *Treatise on True Devotion*, but to an earlier work, *L'Amour de la Sagesse Eternelle*; moreover, it was not just a formula to be recited without thought. Indeed, in the view of its author, its place in Christian life is of such importance that a retreat of thirty days is not too long nor too intensive a preparation. As he understood it, this consecration was not to be an



ordinary, but a perfect one, a means of perfection meant for those generous souls who really intend to realise, as far as they may, the perfection of their state as baptised Christians.

The work of Fr Poupon takes the form of a detailed commentary of the actual text of the consecration. This falls naturally into three parts: preparation, consecration, oblation and union. The preparation deals with our Lord, to whom the consecration is made, and our Lady, through whom it is made; what they are and what should be our attitude to them. The second part or consecration considers Jesus, God's gift to man, and our filial offering of ourselves to him; then 'through Mary', showing the characteristics of a life led in utter dependence on her, our Mother and our Queen. (If Mary really is our queen, then we are her subjects and may well be called her slaves, by reason of our complete dependence on her in all our thoughts, words and actions.) The third part considers the actual offering of ourselves to Jesus through Mary, and our union with him through her, with all its implications for the daily practice of our lives. The volume concludes with a number of theological notes, some of which are extremely suggestive and stimulating.

Those who take the trouble to read and meditate this work will certainly be well rewarded; for those, however, who tremble at the idea of getting through so weighty a tome, the author has produced a smaller edition, *A Jésus par Marie*, which contains all the essential parts of the larger work, without the longer developments and the illustrative extracts from the sources. This handy little book, by reason of the division into small sections and the running summary in the margins, should prove very useful for mental prayer, and also for those who have to explain the *Treatise on True Devotion*; many, indeed, who do not feel particularly called to make the 'perfect consecration' will find it useful in these respects. Many too, no doubt, having used this smaller edition for some time, will be tempted to embark on the larger work; and will not find this the laborious task they may have feared, being now so admirably prepared, and possessing the plan and the line of thought of the author. We may add that the original edition was strongly recommended by Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, in his preface to the book, and the author has since received a laudatory letter from His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

ANTONINUS FINILI, O.P.

GREGORIAN CHANT and its place in the Catholic Liturgy. By J. Smits Van Waesberghe. (Sidgwick and Jackson; 7s. 6d.)

This book, written in the first place for the benefit of the non-expert in church music, and for non-Catholics in particular, will appeal to a wider public if only by the charm and skill with which the author



presents his subject. In an admirable introduction he tells us that of all the chants of the various European liturgies 'the Roman or properly so-called Gregorian Chant is the most beautiful; technically and artistically the most perfect'. But it is music which is above all religious in character, and the writer insists upon its intimate connection with the religious drama of the liturgy, of which it is the clothing and accompaniment. This too explains why it is vocal music.

After a first hearing, he tells us, Gregorian Chant so often leaves 'an impression of unexpected and surprising yet perplexing beauty'. In order to understand and appreciate this form of music some knowledge of the liturgy is necessary; and so, for the benefit of those unacquainted with the liturgy of the Church, we are given the two main divisions of the liturgical repertory. These are the chants of Holy Mass and those of the Divine Office or Hours. The author dwells chiefly on the former. There is an excellent table of the order of the Chants of the Mass, which will be instructive also to Catholics, of whom so many, alas! have no opportunity of hearing a liturgically sung Mass.

The next chapter speaks of the early beginnings and the development of the chant, which is judiciously classified into primitive chants, independent melodies and melismatic chants. Then comes a detailed analysis of one Mass (the Mass for Whitsunday is chosen). This is followed by a brief historical survey of the Chant and then by a chapter on interpretation and notation. The author adds a chapter to show the close connection between Gregorian Chant and the Dutch religious folksong, for he is professor of music at a college in Nijmegen.

A few statements, as for instance those concerning the origins of the Chant, might be questioned by some specialists, and one regrets that nothing at all is said about the modal system of the chant. The compass of the book no doubt limited its scope, so that, for the same reason, the section on the interpretation of the chant is very incomplete.

The great value of this book would seem to be that it places Gregorian Chant in its true setting against a historical background, which will help people to understand and appreciate its beauty. For this we should indeed be grateful to the author. It is a stimulating introduction to the chant and should awaken in every Catholic reader a desire for more knowledge of the Church's great musical heritage.

The book is beautifully produced, with delightful illustrations.

R. C. GABAIN

THE TWELVE FRUITS. Meditations on The Holy Ghost. By C. J. Woollen. (Herder; 18s. 6d.)

This book fulfils a need. It is a series of meditations for ordinary good-living people, who have received the seven 'gifts', and desire to bring forth the 'fruits' which are the work of the Holy Ghost. Each fruit is



treated in a very simple and practical way and gives much food for earnest reflection and meditation. It is particularly suited to the days in which we live, for the author points out that the lack of peace in the world today shows that the Holy Ghost is not allowed to inspire the world's work. To quote the author: 'Make no mistake, our public men who make today so great a show of confidence, and who pretend to have the solution of world problems discovered by their own powers, are profoundly unhappy men. They are never at peace, for they ignore in their lives and activities the only Source of peace, the Holy Spirit of God, who alone can inspire the things that are to the peace of the world.' (p. 44.) This passage is typical of the practical manner in which the author suggests ways of manifesting in our lives the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The book is well printed; and deserves a wide circulation.

PATRICK J. O'MAHONY

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF ST JOHN. By E. K. Lee. (S.P.C.K.; 17s. 6d.)

This is a readable and in many ways valuable study of the theology of the Gospel and First Epistle of St John. These writings are ascribed, with slight hesitation, to a single author, probably 'John the Elder', but in the closest dependence on St John the Apostle. Mr Lee upholds the general historicity of the fourth Gospel; though he is convinced, rightly no doubt, that the speeches it contains represent only the substance of what was said, expressed in the writer's own characteristic manner. The present book, however, is not much concerned with critical questions. It is an essay in Biblical theology; and its author seeks to grasp the historical and philosophical point of view of the Johannine books and to present their religious teaching as a unified whole. As he says, it is easy to arrange the topics of John's doctrine under headings and to discuss them separately; it is much harder to show how one part of his thought dovetails into another and to display their unity. One can say in general that his attempt has succeeded. The historical standpoint of the Gospel and Epistle, their debt to Judaism and to Hellenist thought, their firm basis in the person, action and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ as the beloved disciple had known him: all these are made clear. A unifying principle is found in the doctrine that God is love, which is at the heart of both John's theology and of his practical ethics. God as love is communicative of himself, both in his own intimate life, in his self-revelation in the Logos made flesh, and in the gift to men of eternal life. Men in their turn have to appropriate that life, not only by believing in God and knowing him, but by loving one another.

The book cannot here be discussed in detail, but one general criticism ought to be made. Mr Lee is too modest. He is an Anglican, with a solid and conservative tradition of Johannine criticism behind him,



which evidently for the most part he makes his own. Yet he too readily cites a variety of Liberal writers, with whom in fact he disagrees, rather than decides a question himself. He quotes, for instance, Dr Burkitt, who denies that John 1, 1, introduces any distinction in the Godhead and holds it to be strictly parallel to Gen. 1, 26, where 'the one only God produces the creation by consulting himself'. Mr Lee does not share this opinion; but is it of such weight that he need mention it?

Hardly enough is made of the institutional element in St John, which, as von Hügel is quoted as saying, underlies the entire work. The Christian community and the two great sacraments are not neglected, any more than Christ's promise of the Paraclete; but there seems to be no discussion of John 20, 23, of the sacramental forgiveness of sins, of Confirmation, or of the pastoral charge to St Peter. The Parousia is simply identified with the coming of the Paraclete, while Christ's second coming at the End is merely the 'crude eschatology' of earlier Christian preaching. The author has a few other surprising opinions; yet on the whole he has written a work in which well-instructed Catholics could find profit. As vicar of an industrial parish he has also set an example of persevering study and literary creation which many priests might take to heart.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

DOES GOD MATTER FOR ME? By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Rich and Cowan; 6s.)

It would be as impertinent to review Father Martindale as it would be otiose to welcome him, but even a reprint of his work cannot go ungreeted. In 1951 English readers are perhaps more interested in systematic theology than they were in 1937 when this book first appeared. The theology however must be intelligible and bear some relationship to the ordinary things of everyday life. In a tightly packed little book Father Martindale shows what the *fact* of God means for man. When he has outlined his theological principles he fills in the outlines, not only with snippets from Mrs Humphrey Ward, but with his own experiences in an aeroplane or in New Zealand—the picture is not only coloured: it is 'a movie'. Few theological writers can fascinate like Father Martindale.

A.R.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF THE CONTEMPLATION OF CHRIST. Newly translated by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (Mowbray; 4s. 6d.)

This classic was originally attributed to St Augustine, but was in fact a work of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, derived from the *Confessio Theologica* of John of Fécamp (†1078). But whoever the



author may have been he had certainly tasted of the authentic spring of the Christian's knowledge and love of God. It reveals the objective spirituality of the one who seeks God through Christ and is yet not unaware of the great happiness and the wholeness which comes from this desire for a union with God. In other words, it is untouched with post-reformation trends in spirituality which have led us to our modern self-conscious search for the 'disinterested' love of God. The translator has done his work well and the result is neither too archaic nor slickly modern.

C.P.

ANNE-ELISABETH SETON. Une fille américaine de Monsieur Vincent.

By Jeanne Danemarie. (Editions Spes; Paris.)

This book is intended to popularise the life and work of one of the greatest personalities of the last century, too little known in Europe. It traces the life of Elisabeth from childhood, through trials of married life and widowhood to her conversion, vocation and the many persecutions which followed, in a series of vivid pictures written most attractively. As the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, Father Slattery, points out in his valuable preface, people of all ages, in all states of life have much to learn from this biography. Her work has prospered and there are now ten thousand Sisters of Charity in America working chiefly amongst the poor and suffering.

X.Y.

WHAT IS CONTEMPLATION; By Thomas Merton, O.C.R. (Paternoster Series 7; Burns Oates; 1s. 6d.)

Thomas Merton has established himself in the forefront of modern spiritual writers. This fact, coupled with the subject-matter of the pamphlet, ought to ensure for it a wide circulation. It is a satisfying little book in so far as anything so slight can be satisfying: sound teaching set down with a calmness and understanding that makes more appeal on that very account. What better tribute can one pay to any book than to say that it is easy to read and well worth reading?

A.D.

VIVRE DIEU. By Régis Gerest, O.P. (Editions de Cerf; pp. 310.)

This little book deals with our life as Christians, considered in its essential element, 'to love God' by the practice of the theological virtues. For those who are sufficiently well instructed, it should prove invaluable as a help to mental prayer; the division into numbered sections and short numbered paragraphs seems to make it particularly suitable for this purpose, or better still, perhaps, for meditative reading. The Holy Scriptures, St Thomas, together with St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross are frequently quoted, and the author's well merited reputation as a spiritual writer is a sure guarantee of the soundness of his doctrine.

A.F.



## NOTES ON RECENT BOOKS

FOR THEE ALONE (Herder; 18s. 6d.) was occasioned by the author's being asked to give a series of conferences to a community of Sisters whose life was based on the Rule of St Augustine. Fr H. J. Beutler, C.M., begins his talks to the religious with one on devotion to St Thomas Aquinas with 'Nothing but Thyself, Lord' as his text. With St Augustine and St Thomas behind him Fr Beutler becomes very practical on such themes as the prevention of sickness in convents and the practices of Christian modesty. The style is sometimes stilted.

IN THE SERVICE OF YOUTH (Sands; 10s. 6d.) is a translation of a life of St Jeanne de Lestonnac, who was canonised in 1949. She was a widow who became the foundress of the first teaching order for girls in France. Her Order of the Daughters of Notre Dame has two houses in England, of which the one at Cobham is the novitiate; there are many more in America and on the Continent.

QUEEN OF HEAVEN (Sands; 6s.) by Miss Teresa Lloyd gives in effect a scheme of our Lady's life from her birth, throughout the Gospels and then in history up to the present time. The style is simple and attractive and it makes a happy compendium of devotion to our Lady with plenty of food for meditation.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH (Messenger Office; 6s.) by Fr Boase, S.J., was written to supplement the many practical books on how to pray, which often make this essential Christian activity seem rather complicated. This is a book of theory to show *why* the Christian prays. Such was the author's intention and he set out to write with simple modern examples, such as 'The Becher's Brook of prayer', to explain prayer to the laity. Yet he seems to have achieved a fairly comprehensive summary of what many great writers have already described. We still need a really thorough book on the theory of prayer placing it in its true context of the Mystical Body and the Sacraments.

MORE PROFESSIONAL PRAYERS (R. H. Johns; 4s. 6d.) is the posthumous conclusion of Fr A. Gille's series of prayers, many of which have appeared in *The Catholic Herald*. They arouse deep feelings either of dislike or pleasure. They contain a lot of sound sense, but whether such sense should be couched in terms of direct speech with God is a matter of differing opinions.

THIRTY-THREE FRIDAYS (M. H. Gill; 7s. 6d.) provides priests with short meditations on the sufferings of the High Priest, the Lamb of God. The author is Fr Aloysius, O.F.M.CAP.



## EXTRACTS

## FROM CORRESPONDENCE

A SUGGESTION for a book on the Martyrs: 'Going through Dom Bede Camm's *Birthday Book* I thought what an interesting compilation could be made illustrating the different mentalities, the ones who so to speak boasted of pain, the others who were content with just getting through, the marvellous array of jokes and confounding repartees, the woman interest—for example Louisa de Carvajal—the '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*' theme . . . The theme of "Merrie England" which some great men appear to scorn, could be well illustrated by more than one incident—above all the superb answer to the Minister who rebuked the martyr for jokes: "It is indeed no joking matter for me, but you cannot deny that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." I like specially too the story of the martyr who said the sections of the Angelus at the first three steps of the ladder. Perhaps some doctor would examine the question of the martyrs who appear to have been conscious when their own hearts were shown to them.'

COMFORTERS OF CHRIST: A correspondent follows up the idea of a League of Penance by tackling the difficult word 'Victim', which also should convey the fundamental attitude of the martyr:

'When one thinks of what being a 'victim' meant in the case of such married people as Bl. Anna Gesualda Taigi, and such consecrated virgins as St Margaret Mary, one might well quail from the idea, but it is safe to say that they were very specially chosen by God in that character, and it may be tentatively suggested that though all the saints are saints, and therefore people of complete self-surrender to God, they were not all pounded in the mortar of God's justice like Bl. Anna and St Margaret. And the word 'victim' may be accepted in a sense which need terrify no one, and yet provide our Lord with a large army of comforters among 'ordinary' folk. Perhaps in that very statement there lies a suggestion. To be "comforters of Christ" is a more attractive way of expressing the same truth, just as "love of our Lord" is a warm way of talking about "holiness".'

'In his Encyclical on *Universal Reparation* to the Sacred Heart of 8th May, 1928, Pope Pius XI issued an invitation to Catholics in general to become comforters of Christ. "To the duty of reparation", he says, "we are bound by a more powerful motive of justice and love." It is interesting to observe how the Little Flower says that she can understand anybody blenching at the idea of offering himself a victim to the Justice of God, and yet she is mystified by anybody quailing before a similar offering to the merciful Love of God. Her own act of Victim-



hood was couched in terms of the merciful Love of God. She asked for a legion of souls who would do the same. Surely it is not fanciful to think that that great client of St Teresa of Lisieux, Pius XI, had her in mind when he wrote the encyclical, particularly when he said, "By the favour of the Holy Spirit, there is also a great increase in the number of the faithful, both men and women, who valiantly strive to make satisfaction to the Divine Heart . . . who do not fear even to offer themselves to Christ as victims. Whoever ponders with love over what we have been saying, and impresses it deeply upon his heart, will undoubtedly not only hate sin and shun it as the greatest of all evils, but will offer himself to the Divine Will, and use every means in his power to compensate for the offences committed against the Divine Majesty, by constant prayer, by voluntary mortification, and by the patient acceptance of all the trials that may come upon him—in fact, by living his whole life in the spirit of reparation".

The League of Penance has its charter ready-made in the above words, and the charter is largely-enough conceived to include 'ordinary' people . . . The function of the Angel of the Agony was in great part to represent to our Lord the reparative actions that would be performed down the ages by all souls of good-will, from the sublime reparation of Mary, along through the dependent reparation of chosen souls, to the lesser reparation (but how valuable to him who acknowledges a cup of cold water!) of ordinary men and women. It is then a real truth, if a mystical one, that they who accept the Pope's invitation console Jesus Christ, making up for the mockery. Of course Jesus Christ is not suffering here and now, but 'a lover will understand what I mean'. If our Lord's Passion is as valuable as if he were suffering it here and now for me, surely it is a legitimate expression to say that by reparation I comfort him here and now. There is no past and future with God but only an 'eternal now', and the Passion of Christ takes on something of the timelessness of God for he is the Lamb 'slain from the foundation of the world'.

There is another angle from which to regard the matter. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?', said our Lord to the vessel of election. Paul was persecuting Christ's members, and was therefore persecuting Christ, as truly as one cannot have a pain in the foot without the mind being conscious of the pain. If Christ suffers in his members, he is also consoled by his members. We fill up the things that are wanting to the Passion of Christ by taking the merits supplied by our Head to whose Passion nothing can possibly be wanting in substance, and applying them to ourselves and our own generation. 'The whole body of Christians, rightly called by the Prince of the Apostles "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood", must offer sacrifice for sins, both for



themselves and for the whole human race, just as every priest "taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God". (Encyclical) . . .

A CHALLENGE from inside the cloister comes in another letter: 'A Carmelite life in the world does not seem to be really possible, for the essential "stripping" could never be accomplished outside Enclosure or the Rule, nor could it be born. May I suggest that it is a great pity so much is made of "contemplative life" in the world now. It seems to me to be misleading and to tend to lead souls to think they can attain that which only the "stripping" of enclosed life could accomplish. In view of the difficulties of the purification and the unearthliness to which it calls us it seems that very rarely does God give that grace to get rid of self in all its forms while living in the world . . . I do not mean that one must be a Carmelite to be a contemplative! But the union at which we aim takes the capacity of the "whole man" and would be very difficult to attain while caring of necessity for the things of this world.'

This point of view demands serious consideration by those who set the high ideal of contemplation consciously before them.

THE IRISH ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW continues to serve its readers well by printing original Roman documents. Of particular interest in the April issue is the instruction on the constitution *Sponsa Christi*. Here the laws regarding enclosure and the works the nuns are able to undertake are elucidated as well as the new plans for 'federation'.

TIJDSCHRIFT VOOR GEESTELIJK LEVEN (Louvain) in its March-April issue contains an article on the Paschal mystery as a mirror of the heavenly life, showing how important this was for the early Christians who saw the secret of Baptism as a constant death leading to the new and heavenly life.

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